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UB Law Forum

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## MITCHELL LECTURE

*International law scholar to speak on Oct. 27*

A leading international law scholar with a special interest in Africa will deliver the 2010 Mitchell Lecture at UB Law School. The Oct. 27 appearance by Henry J. Richardson III, professor of law at the Beasley School of Law at Temple University, continues a distinguished tradition that began with the lecture series' founding in 1950.

Richardson's address, he says, will draw from his recently published book *The Origins of African-American Interests in International Law* (Carolina Academic Press). In the book, Richardson explores the birth of the African-American international tradition and the roots of African-Americans' stake in international law, and he will draw on those themes, both historical and contemporary, for his lecture.

"I'm going to reflect on some of the lessons, insights and implications we can draw from the historical development of African-Americans' interest in international law," Richardson says. "With respect to their welfare, how international law in certain cases is interpreted can make a difference."

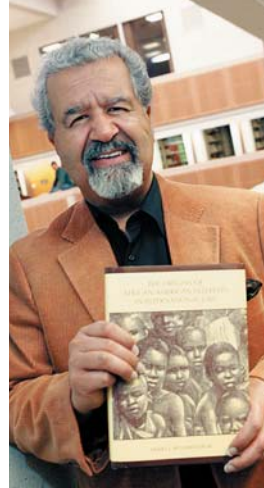
Historically, for example, the capture and sale of Africans as slaves was condoned by international law. "The slave trade was a grand, ugly international enterprise as it fed into the North American corner of the British Empire," he says, "and you can only fully understand it through its international connections. In this context, African-Americans' international interests have their roots in the history of Africa and slavery well before the formal organization of the United States."

Another, more recent example, he says, is the United States' ratification in 1945 of the United Nations Charter. Pioneering civil rights activist W.E.B. DuBois testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Richardson says, about the human rights provisions of the charter and their applicability to U.S. citizens.

"African-Americans not only supported ratification of the charter, but they had an interest in the authority of those human rights provisions being interpreted to be binding and authoritative in the United States," he says. "In part that would mean that the treaty would provide more or less the equivalent of an American civil rights statute. But in the 1940s there was fierce dedication to there not being a civil rights statute. The doctrinal and legal basis for the charter having that effect as a civil rights statute was there. But the U.S. implementation of the charter had written into it an interpretation that its human rights provisions were not binding on any nation" — an instance, he says, when a different interpretation of international law would have advanced the cause of civil rights by decades.

Richardson shares with UB Law Dean Makau W. Mutua a deep interest in the fortunes of Africa. After Richardson graduated from Yale Law School in 1966, he served for more than two years as international legal adviser to the government of Malawi shortly after that southeast African nation gained independence from British rule. There he advised on inherited treaties and a range of southern African international legal negotiations and questions.

After returning to the United States, he earned a master of laws degree from the University of California at Los Angeles, was associate professor of law at Indiana and Northwestern law schools, and served on the staff of the National Security Council in charge of African



policy during President Jimmy Carter's administration. After periods as senior foreign policy adviser to the Congressional Black Caucus and as an attorney in the Office of General Counsel of the Department of Defense, he joined the Temple Law faculty in 1981.

Richardson has written many scholarly articles for the *American Journal of International Law* and other international law journals. He teaches courses on international law, constitutional law and foreign

policy, international human rights and international organizations. He also was a co-founder of the National Conference of Black Lawyers, the Africa Interest Group of the American Society of International Law and Temple's *International and Comparative Law Journal*. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and a counsellor to the American Society of International Law.

UB Law School's Mitchell Lecture Series was endowed by a gift from Lavinia A. Mitchell in memory of her husband, James McCormick Mitchell. An 1897 graduate of the Law School, Mitchell later served as chairman of the Council of the University of Buffalo, which was then a private university.

Mitchell Lecture programs have brought many distinguished speakers to UB Law School. They have included Irene Khan, C. Edwin Baker, Derrick Bell, Barry Cushman, Carol Gilligan, Elizabeth Holtzman, Stewart Macaulay, Catharine McKinnon, Carrie Menkel-Meadow, Richard Posner, Clyde Summers and John Payton.